



# Teenage Girls, Women and Pregnancy

**Women** are the fastest growing group of people with HIV/AIDS infection in the United States. All ethnic groups are affected. Women most often get HIV/AIDS because they share intravenous (IV) drug needles with an infected person, or because they have had sex with an infected partner. HIV/AIDS is not only dangerous for a woman, but for any children she gives birth to after she is infected.

There are special programs in the community that will help women and their children infected with HIV/AIDS.

## How women get HIV

HIV is spread primarily by blood, semen, vaginal secretions or breastmilk from an infected person to someone else through mucous membranes or through torn or broken skin. This usually happens through:

- unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex with an infected person.
- sharing needles or other contact with blood (including menstrual blood) of an infected person.
- receiving infected blood or blood products (primarily from transfusions before April 1985).
- artificial insemination from an infected donor.

## Special symptoms in women

In addition to the symptoms listed on the Information Sheet *HIV/AIDS Basic Facts*, symptoms of AIDS that can develop in women include:

- menstrual irregularities (trouble with periods)
- cervical cancer (neoplasias)
- PID (pelvic inflammatory disease)
- recurrent yeast infections (vaginal candidiasis)



**For more information, call the United Way for organizations that help women and children with HIV/AIDS. Read the other HIV Information Sheets in this series for more help.**

## HIV and having babies

- A woman who is infected with HIV can pass the virus to her child during pregnancy, at birth or through breastfeeding.
- Get an HIV test before you become pregnant if you have any of the risks for HIV or think you could have this infection.
- If you find out you are HIV-positive, talk to your doctor or clinic as soon as you know you are pregnant or that you have HIV. The medication ZDV (formerly known as AZT) may protect your baby from getting HIV infection during birth.

## Think ahead if you want to have babies

- Don't do drugs.
- Don't have sex with someone who does drugs.
- Delay having sex until you have a faithful, long-time partner.
- If you don't delay, get yourself and your partner tested for HIV before having sex.
- Practice the safest sex possible.

## Teenagers - something to think about

Not having anal, oral or vaginal sex is called **abstinence**. Many teenagers choose to be abstinent before they reach adulthood and have a long-time, faithful HIV-negative partner.

Do not let anyone **pressure** you into having risky or dangerous sex. Because you cannot be certain of another person's sexual history, do not assume that someone who says they are HIV negative is actually negative.

Remember, you can get HIV from oral sex as well as from vaginal or anal sex. You can also get HIV from a partner who shoots drugs.



### **For information about HIV testing, call:**

County of San Diego - Health and Human Services Agency - (619) 515-6600

### **For more information about HIV/AIDS, call:**

Southern California AIDS Hotline  
English: 1-800-922-AIDS; Spanish: 1-800-400-SIDA  
National AIDS Hotline - 1-800-342-AIDS

